

Maniotti, N. (2016) 'Family in Flavian Epic' in N. Maniotti, ed. *Family in Flavian Epic*, 1-13. Leiden and Boston [Mnemosyne Supplements, 394; Brill].

Flavian epic offers a rich exploration of the family, and Flavian studies have embraced this accordingly, with a large number of publications including articles, chapters, and two seminal monographs.<sup>1</sup> The reader of the four surviving epics (Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*, Statius' *Thebaid* and *Achilleid*, and Silius Italicus' *Punica*) will not be surprised to find in them scores of examples of filial piety, maternal concern and sisterly affection, parents lamenting the death of their children, brothers vying for succession and taking up arms against each other.<sup>2</sup> The myths of the Argonautic expedition, the war against Thebes, and Achilles' stay on Scyros treat such themes from their earliest appearance in literature and art.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, these poems consciously engage with an epic tradition which revels in these and similar myths, and consequently in depictions of families. Finally, not only Silius' historical poem, but also Valerius' and Statius' mythological endeavours are a product of their Roman, and specifically Flavian context, for which the family both as an institution and in its imperial manifestation has a central place.<sup>4</sup>

Family is an important feature in the life of epic heroes.<sup>5</sup> The very plot of the Homeric poems is motivated by a man's desire to be reunited with his wife and son (Odysseus' *nostos*) and another man's wish to reclaim the wife stolen from him and

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Augoustakis (2006); Newlands (2006); Bernstein (2008); Rosati (2008); Parkes (2009); Bernstein (2010); Augoustakis (2010b), (2012); Brescia (2012); Zissos (2012); Cowan (2014); Bernstein (2015); Gervais (2015).

<sup>2</sup> Recent companions on the three Flavian poets include Heerink and Manuwald (2014); Dominik, Newlands and Gervais (2015); Augoustakis (2010a). On their interaction with Greek literature, see Augoustakis (2014); with each other, Manuwald and Voigt (2013).

<sup>3</sup> On family in Greek myth, see Slater (1968); Patterson (1998); Boulogne (2007).

<sup>4</sup> For an overview of scholarship on the Roman family, see Rawson (2011) 9–10. As she points out, the initial focus on law and class shifted in the course of the twentieth century to gender, to address in more recent years topics such as childhood and old age which resonate with contemporary audiences. See also n. 15 below for further bibliography.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. Patterson (1998) 44–69 on Homer and Hesiod.

taken to a new city and household (the Trojan War). For the heroes, who often are descended from the gods by a single generation, [p. 1] ancestry is everything.<sup>6</sup> They take pride in their parents' achievements and family heirlooms such as Agamemnon's sceptre (*Il.* 2.101–108). Sons look up to their fathers and aim to equal or even surpass them in glory; his peers expect Diomedes to be at least as brave as his father Tydeus (3.370–375), and before he left to take part in the war, Glaucus was famously admonished “always to excel and to be superior to others, and not to shame the race of [his] fathers”, 6.208–209).<sup>7</sup> Both blood and marriage create alliances, and those bound by them do not hesitate to join in wars in faraway lands; simply by being Helen's suitors alongside him, the Achaean kings help Menelaus exact revenge on Paris for the insult on his marriage. The poems depict every possible variation of the household, from the immense palace of Priam, which includes apartments for his numerous children and their spouses, to Odysseus' family of three, excluding his father who lives alone in the countryside. Intrafamilial conflict is not unknown;<sup>8</sup> Phoenix chooses exile over giving in to anger and killing his father (*Il.* 9.447–480), and Agamemnon cautions Odysseus against trusting Penelope for fear of sharing his own fate at the hands of Clytemnestra (*Od.* 11.409–456). In the Theban cycle, likewise, a curse that is handed down through the generations accounts for Oedipus' patricide and incestuous marriage to his mother, her suicide, the enmity between their sons which results in their mutual killing, and the complete eradication of the Labdacid line.

The situation is similar with tragedy, in which female figures in their familial roles as mothers, daughters, sisters and wives, become even more prominent.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> On the use of this belief in the practice of kinship diplomacy, see Jones (1999), and on the use of kinship myth as a political tool, Patterson (2010).

<sup>7</sup> On fathers and sons in the Homeric epics, see Wöhrle (1999); Pratt (2009); Wöhrle (2009); Petropoulos (2011).

<sup>8</sup> On the conflict of generations in Homer, see Querbach (1976).

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. Foley (2001).

The myths are used as a ground on which to experiment with issues affecting the *polis*, a microcosm of which is the family.<sup>10</sup> With Hellenistic epic, the expansion of the Greek world and the radical changes in political structures allow for the reworking of known myths and the families within them to give expression to new concerns.<sup>11</sup> Now politics becomes established as a feature of epic destined to reach its climax in Rome. [p. 2]

Latin epic, especially from Virgil onwards, reflects Roman beliefs and attitudes towards the family, as well as engaging with imperial ideology even when it is ostensibly mythological.<sup>12</sup> The imperial family is mentioned, addressed, or features outright in prophecies and visions of the future. Its historical and legendary ancestors are often the protagonists of the poems. Filial piety, loyalty to one's family, marital harmony, and the continuation of the line, are all ideals promoted in Roman culture which are also explored in Latin epic. Its treatment of intrafamilial conflict is particularly poignant for Rome as it evokes its legendary founding on an act of fratricide, and kin murder appears in Roman literature in general as a byword for civil war which characterises the state for much of its recent history.<sup>13</sup>

In the *Aeneid*, for example, the poet emphasises the continuity between Aeneas and Augustus, who is mentioned together with his adoptive father Julius Caesar both in Jupiter's prophecy (1.286–296) and in Anchises' description of the

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<sup>10</sup> On the family in Greek tragedy see Alaux (1995), Ormand (1999) and Belfiore (2000); in Greek and Roman comedy, Sherberg (1995); and on the conflict of generations in ancient drama, Baier (2007). On women's family roles in Roman Republican drama, see the essays in Dutsch, James and Konstan (2015).

<sup>11</sup> On contemporary politics in Apollonius, see Mori (2008).

<sup>12</sup> On contemporary politics in Virgil's *Aeneid*, Cairns (1989), Stahl (1990), Quint (1993), White (1993), Stahl (1998), Thomas (2001), Powell (2008), and Miller (2009); in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Miller (2009) and Feldherr (2010); in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, Quint (1993) and Fratantuono (2012); in Valerius' *Argonautica*, Stover (2012); in Statius' *Thebaid*, Dominik (1994), Lovatt (2005), and Bessone (2011); in Silius' *Punica*, Marks (2005). See also McGuire (1997), Nauta (2002), Leberl (2004), and the essays in Dominik, Garthwaite and Roche (2009).

<sup>13</sup> On fraternal *pietas* in Roman literature and culture, see Bannon (1997). On civil war in Latin literature, see Hardie (1993), Henderson (1998), and the essays in Breed, Damon and Rossi (2010).

souls in the Underworld (6.788–807). Similarly, at the end of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Augustus is described in Jupiter's prophecy as gazing at his successors (15.834–837). Caesar himself, after his apotheosis, admits that his son is superior to him (850–851), and Augustus is included in a list of sons who were more famous and powerful than their fathers (855–860), culminating with Jupiter "to compare like with like" (857).

The Virgilian emphasis on the father-son bond between Anchises and Aeneas, Aeneas and Ascanius, but also Aeneas and Pallas who is entrusted in his care,<sup>14</sup> reflects not only the Roman son's reliance on his father for instruction and financial support,<sup>15</sup> but also Augustus' rise to power through adoption by Julius Caesar,<sup>16</sup> his own concerns about succession,<sup>17</sup> and resort to adoption of his grandsons and stepsons.<sup>18</sup> Aeneas' marriage to Lavinia, decided by her father despite an earlier promise of her hand to Turnus,<sup>19</sup> is comparable to Roman marriages of alliance characteristic of the Late Republic and Early Empire;<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> On the father-son relationship in the *Aeneid*, see Lee (1979) and Tschiedel (1987). On motherhood in Augustan epic, see Fantham (2004–2005) on the *Metamorphoses*; McAuley (2012) on the *Aeneid* and the *Metamorphoses*; and McAuley (2015) on Virgil and Ovid (as well as Seneca and Statius). Stein (2004) examines women's roles as mothers, daughters and wives in Ovid, and Brescia (2012) treats sisters in Virgil, Ovid and Silius Italicus. On the relationship between husband and wife in the *Aeneid*, see e.g. Gutting (2006) and Sharrock (2013); and on the conflict of generations, Bertman (1976).

<sup>15</sup> On fatherhood in Rome, see Hallett (1984), Dixon (1992); on motherhood, Dixon (1988), Petersen and Salzman-Mitchell (2012), and Keith and Sharrock (forthcoming); on children, Rawson (1991); Dixon (1992) 98–132; Rawson (2005), Dasen and Späth (2010), Laes (2011), Grubbs and Parkin (2013); on being fatherless, Hübner and Ratzan (2009). See also Dixon (2007) for a biography of the exemplary mother of the Gracchi, Cornelia.

<sup>16</sup> Lindsay (2009) 182–189.

<sup>17</sup> On Augustan succession, see the essays in Gibson (2013). Ancient sources include Tacitus (*Ann.* 1.3) and Suetonius (*Aug.* 63–65).

<sup>18</sup> On adoption in Rome, see Kunst (2005), and Lindsay (2009); *ibid.* 190–216 on adoption in the imperial family.

<sup>19</sup> This promise is viewed by both Amata and Turnus as effectively an engagement; e.g. Amata broods over "Turnus' marriage" (*Turnique hymenaeis*, *A.* 7.344), and reminds Latinus of Lavinia's "right hand, so often pledged to [their] kinsman Turnus" (*consanguineo totiens data dextera Turno*, 365), while Turnus vows to "destroy the accursed race that snatched away [his] bride" (*sceleratam excindere gentem / coniuge praerepta*, 9.137–138). The gods, however, have actually forbidden such an engagement to take place (*sed uariis portenta deum terroribus obstant*, 7.58), and Faunus' advice to his son Latinus is clear: "do not trust the bridal chamber at hand" (*thalamis neu crede paratis*, 97). I thank the anonymous reviewer for this point.

<sup>20</sup> On marriage in Rome, see Rawson (1991), Treggiari (1991), and Dixon (1992) 61–97.

Augustus himself divorced his wife to marry the better connected Livia even though she was married and pregnant at the time, and he orchestrated three successive marriages for his daughter Julia in order to provide the imperial family with a male heir.<sup>21</sup> When Virgil was writing his epic, family was already used to serve Augustus' political agenda,<sup>22</sup> as he honoured his sister Octavia and wife Livia with statues depicting them as chaste matrons.<sup>23</sup> After Virgil's death, the imperial family became omnipresent whether directly, e.g. on coins featuring Julia with her sons, the Ara Pacis, the Gemma Augustea;<sup>24</sup> [p. 4] or through their distinguished ancestors, both mortal (Aeneas, Romulus) and immortal (Venus, Mars, and ultimately Jupiter), in monuments such as the Forum of Augustus.<sup>25</sup> Family after all became synonymous with empire when Augustus received the title *pater patriae* in 2BC,<sup>26</sup> evoking *pater Aeneas* in Virgil's epic,<sup>27</sup> but with the whole world to rule over and protect, as Ovid points out,<sup>28</sup> and consequently comparable to Jupiter.<sup>29</sup>

Both the Julio-Claudians and the Flavians followed Augustus in promoting family unity and succession through actions as well as visual ideology.<sup>30</sup> Agrippina featured in many statuary groups together with her husband, children, and other

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<sup>21</sup> On Livia and her relationship to her imperial family, see Barrett (2002); Burns (2007) 5–24. On Augustus' daughter Julia, see Fantham (2006).

<sup>22</sup> On the use of the family in Augustan ideology, see Zanker (1988), Severy (2003), and Galinsky (2012).

<sup>23</sup> On representations of Octavia and Julia, see Wood (1999) 27–74; of Livia, Bartman (1998); Wood (1999) 75–141.

<sup>24</sup> See the discussions in Zanker (1988) 216–217, Severy (2003) 104–111, and Zanker (1988) 230–232 respectively. On representations of the successors Gaius and Lucius, see Zanker (1988) 215–223; Tiberius, Drusus and Germanicus, *ibid.* 223–233. On children in imperial art, see Uzzi (2005).

<sup>25</sup> Zanker (1988) 193–210.

<sup>26</sup> See Sthrothmann (2000).

<sup>27</sup> Occurring 18 times in the poem.

<sup>28</sup> *auspicibusque deis tanti cognominis heres / omine suscipiat, quo pater, orbis onus, Fast.* 1.615–616; *iam pridem tu pater orbis eras, 2.130.*

<sup>29</sup> *nec tibi grata minus pietas, Auguste, tuorum / quam fuit illa Ioui, Met.* 1.204–205; *Iuppiter arces / temperat aetherias et mundi regna triformis, / terra sub Augusto est; pater est et rector uterque, 15.858–860; hoc tu per terras, quod in aethere Iuppiter alto, / nomen habes: hominum tu pater, ille deum, Fast.* 2.131–132.

<sup>30</sup> On the use of family imagery in imperial ideology after Augustus, see Kampen (2009).

members of the imperial family;<sup>31</sup> coins were minted to celebrate the birth of heirs;<sup>32</sup> and Vespasian prepared Titus to succeed him by assigning him magistracies, sending him to wage wars on his behalf, and including him in his triumphs.<sup>33</sup> Ancient sources, however, also report scandals involving the imperial family, not all of which were mere rumours: from Julia's banishment [p. 5] by her own father for alleged adultery,<sup>34</sup> to Caligula's incest with his sisters and involvement in Tiberius' death,<sup>35</sup> to Nero's murder of his pregnant wife,<sup>36</sup> and Domitian's conspiracies against his father and brother.<sup>37</sup> It is not a surprise then that epics produced in the 1st century ad all deal with the family, but often problematize it more than their earlier counterparts.

On Friday 20th June 2014, six scholars of Flavian epic met at St Andrews to examine the theme of family in Valerius Flaccus, Statius, and Silius Italicus. Two

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<sup>31</sup> For example, one on the Via Lata in Rome included the reigning emperor Claudius' brother Germanicus together with his mother Antonia, wife Agrippina the Younger, adopted son Nero, and two children from a previous marriage, Octavia and Britannicus. The statues do not survive but the inscription on the base of the monument names the members of the imperial family represented; see Ginsburg (2006) 84–85. On visual representations of the Julio-Claudian women, see Wood (1999) 142–314.

<sup>32</sup> E.g. a sestertius minted by Drusus in AD23 to celebrate his twin sons, four years after their birth (*RIC* I2. 97 no. 42) (Rawson (1997) 217).

<sup>33</sup> Suet. *Tit.* 6; J. *BJ* 7.5.3; Domitian was also included in the triumph (Suet. *Dom.* 2; J. *BJ* 7.5.5). See Levick (1999) for a biography of Vespasian; Jones (1984) on Titus; Jones (1992), and Southern (1997) on Domitian; and Pfeiffer (2009) on all three emperors. On Vespasian's wife, Domitilla the Elder, see Levick (1999) 12–13; on Domitian's wives, Domitia and Flavia Julia (who was also his niece, as daughter of Titus), see Jones (1992) 33–40, and Burns (2007) 85–104.

<sup>34</sup> On Julia's exile, mentioned in Tac. *Ann.* 1.3 and Suet. *Aug.* 65, see Bingham (2003); Cohen (2008).

<sup>35</sup> Ancient sources on Caligula's relationship to his sisters: Suet. *Cal.* 24; J. *AJ* 19.204; D.C. 59.3.6, 59.11.1, 59.26.5; on his involvement in Tiberius' death: Tac. *Ann.* 6.50; Suet. *Tib.* 73; D.C. 58.28. For an assessment, see Winterling (2011), and Barrett (2014).

<sup>36</sup> Poppaea's death is mentioned in Tac. *Ann.* 16.6 and Suet. *Nero* 35; on Nero's relationship to his wives Poppaea and Messalina, and his mother Agrippina, see Malitz (2005) and Barrett (1996).

<sup>37</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 4.86 (Domitian against Vespasian); Suet. *Tit.* 9, *Dom.* 2 (Domitian against Titus); later Dio Cassius credits Domitian with his brother's demise (66.26.2), and tells of Titus on his death-bed regretting not killing Domitian when he had the chance (66.26.4). Titus is also presented as conspiring against his father (Suet. *Tit.* 5), and Domitia as being involved in the conspiracy that brought about her husband's death and the end of the Flavian dynasty (*Dom.* 14). On the relationship of our ancient sources to the Flavian emperors, see the essays in Dominik, Garthwaite and Roche (2009); on Josephus see also Edmondson, Mason and Rives (2007), Hollander (2014); on Pliny the Younger, Hoffer (1999), Winsbury (2014); on Tacitus, Pagán (2012); on Suetonius, Power and Gibson (2014).

months later, five more scholars joined the discussion, and the present volume began to take shape. *Family in Flavian Epic* is the latest in a series of recent works on Flavian epic which take into account the importance of family, but the first to offer a variety of approaches, cover all four poems, and stress in their representation of family bonds both the continuity with epic tradition and earlier Latin literature, and the links to contemporary Rome. The eight essays focusing on a single epic are arranged chronologically, starting with Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* (Stover, Stocks, Buckley), then moving on to Statius' *Thebaid* (Heslin, Maniotti, Newlands) and *Achilleid* (Bessone), and finally Silius Italicus' *Punica* (Littlewood). The volume is rounded off with three essays which deal with overarching themes across more than one Flavian poem (Bernstein, Keith, Augoustakis).

The bond between fathers and sons, central in Homeric as well as Virgilian epic, appears as problematic in the poems of Valerius and Statius. As Stover shows, Jupiter's partial and nepotistic attitude towards his own sons in the *Argonautica* overshadows the efforts of other fathers such as Sol or Neptune, [p. 6] whose monstrous sons nevertheless appear deserving of paternal affection. Similarly, in Augoustakis' discussion of paternal lament, Statius' series of despotic fathers whose mourning outbursts for their dead sons fail to pass as genuine grief is in sharp contrast with Silius' Scipio and the positive outcome of his lament for his dead father.

A comparably varied perspective is offered on the father-daughter relationship. Medea faces a poignant dilemma in the *Argonautica* when she has to choose Jason over her father Aetes, a choice that Stocks sees as reminiscent of rebellious imperial daughters while at the same time serving the Flavian cause of the poem as a whole. Valerius' and Statius' versions of the Lemnian episode, in *Argonautica* 2 and *Thebaid* 5 respectively, present another opportunity to examine

a daughter's piety, as both poets juxtapose Hypsipyle's devotion to her father Thoas to the crimes committed by the other Lemnian women against all male members of their families, including their fathers. Augoustakis reads these episodes with a focus on their combination of lament and transgression of boundaries. At the same time, they contribute to the positive characterisation of Hypsipyle, in order to provide, according to Stocks, a contrast to Medea later in the *Argonautica*, or, as Heslin argues, to her attitude at Nemea later in *Thebaid* 5, where Hypsipyle's resistance to her modelling on Callimachus' Hecale leads to the conscious 'infanticide' of her nursling Opheltes.

A particularly interesting treatment of the parent-child bond is given in Statius' *Achilleid* with the two main parental figures, the foster-father Chiron and the biological mother Thetis, offering two different types of education, heroic and erotic, with origins in epic and elegiac models respectively, as Bessone explains. Such use of non-epic material also has ramifications for the presentation of marriage in Flavian epic. Valerius injects Medea with her tragic future even before she takes up her role as a woman in love, Buckley argues, and this, together with the poem's continuous emphasis on marital conflict, foreshadows the failure of Jason and Medea's wedding well before it takes place in *Argonautica* 8. For Newlands, the appropriation of the elegiac motif of the abandoned heroine destabilises the marital relationships in the *Thebaid*, where the Roman ideals of conjugal harmony and piety are either impossible to achieve, as in the case of Atys and Ismene or Oedipus and Jocasta, or they bring about war and death, as in the case of Argia's love for Polynices.

As Littlewood's essay shows, Silius plays with the notions of fraternal concord and discord, the latter all too poignant for Rome, not only due to its foundation myth on fratricide but also its history of civil wars. In his presentation of Roman and Carthaginian brothers, the epicist does not hesitate to alter history

in order to juxtapose unanimity (the Scipiones) to fraternal division (the Barcids). Statius' *Thebaid* also resonates with Roman concerns, and [p. 7] images of discord extend from marriage to affect relations between siblings too. The conflict between Eteocles and Polynices which drives the plot of the epic inspires Silius' civil war imagery in the episode at Saguntum, which, Bernstein explains, is also presented as a victory of the Fury over Fides, but this time the latter is not free of negative associations. Fraternal conflict is counterbalanced in the Flavian epics by the portrayal of sisters who, in Keith's reading, are characterised by affection and loyalty; rivalry between divine sisters such as the Furies is used to achieve a common goal, whereas in the case of mortals Antigone and Ismene it mirrors their brothers' discord. This is in contrast to the united front presented by the sisters-in-law Argia and Antigone, based as they are on earlier models ranging from Homeric sisters-in-law to Roman epic sisters, as Maniotti shows, until their alliance too falls victim to rivalry in the burial scene of *Thebaid* 12.

Alongside epic and other literary models, the fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of Flavian epic reflect attitudes and beliefs characteristic of the Roman family, whether ideal, legendary or historical. Medea behaves like a Roman *filia* (Stocks), Argia resembles Arria in her wifely devotion (Newlands), and filial loyalty and piety are expected by both Roman and Carthaginian sons in Silius' epic (Littlewood). The epics also convey specifically Flavian concerns such as the recent civil war experience (Bernstein), Vespasian's clemency towards his opponents (Stover), and the need for dynastic unity (Littlewood). For this reason the present volume will be useful not only to the student of Flavian epic, Flavian literature, and Flavian Rome in general, but also to anyone interested in the family and its various manifestations in Roman culture.

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